

To: Guðmundur Ingi Guðbrandsson
Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources
Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources
Skuggasundi 1 – 3, 101 Reykjavík

Subject: Adverse biodiversity impacts of the draft Icelandic nation-wide plan for forestry

17 June 2021, Cambridge

Dear Minister,

We, the undersigned representatives of BirdLife International and its national partners from countries which share migratory waterbirds breeding in Iceland, write to you to express our strong concern regarding the draft national Forestry Plan currently being considered by your Ministry. In its current form, it risks causing serious damage to a number of the breeding waterbird populations shared by our nations.

We strongly believe that the current draft of the forest plan is in breach of Iceland's commitments under the Biodiversity Convention (CBD), Ramsar Convention, Bern Convention and African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), because of its seriously adverse effects on several of Iceland's globally important waterbird populations. In particular, it fails to take into account the 2016 recommendations of AEWA and the Bern Convention (BC) regarding afforestation policy, in the ways outlined in the attached review.

BirdLife recognises the benefits that afforestation can bring, but trees need to be the right – usually native – species, planted in the right places. The waterbird populations that breed in the Icelandic lowlands are second only to Russia in their international importance to the East Atlantic Flyway. Together with your breeding seabirds, these are probably Iceland's greatest contribution to the planet's biodiversity natural heritage. Research in Iceland and beyond shows that planting of the wrong trees in the wrong places can have disproportionately large impacts on breeding waterbird populations due to displacement and increased predation.

Iceland has a very important responsibility and role to play in the conservation of your outstandingly important breeding migratory waterbird populations, not only in your own country, but also in several other countries, which host these birds during the non-breeding months after they have left your shores. The Icelandic Forestry Plan in its current form would undermine the conservation actions that many countries are taking for your birds, for example when they are congregated at Important Bird Areas further south in Europe and Africa.

Iceland is renowned globally as a natural paradise and an environmental frontrunner, attracting tourists accordingly to experience its wide-open landscapes. The current draft Forestry Plan would undermine this unique selling point.

The BirdLife Partnership strongly urges that the draft Icelandic National Forestry Plan is revised in line with the recommendations of AEWA and the Bern Convention, with implementation properly enforced to ensure compliance with Iceland's international commitments on biodiversity conservation and restoration.

Yours sincerely,



Patricia Zurita
Chief Executive Officer
BirdLife International

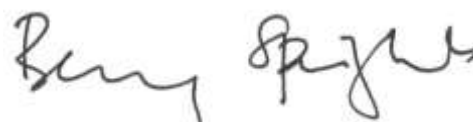
Co-signatories from:

#	Name, Title, Organization	Signature
1.	Phillipe Funcken Director General Natagora BirdLife in Belgium	
2.	Kjetil Aa.Solbakken Secretary General Norsk Ornitologisk Forening (NOF) BirdLife in Norway	
3.	Mark Anderson Chief Executive Officer BirdLife South Africa BirdLife in South Africa	
4.	Mamadou Diawara Executive Director Guinée Ecologie Republic of Guinea	
5.	Danilo Selvaggi Chief Executive Officer Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli (LIPU) BirdLife in Italy	
6.	Julia Pierini Chief Executive Officer BirdLife Zimbabwe BirdLife in Zimbabwe	
7.	Idrissa Jean-Yves Zeba Chief Executive Officer NATURAMA BirdLife in Burkina Faso	

8. Keith Bensusan
General Secretary
Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society
BirdLife in Gibraltar



9. Beccy Speight
Chief Executive Officer
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
BirdLife in the UK



10. Niall Hatch
Officer in Charge
BirdWatch Ireland
BirdLife in Ireland



11. Claudia Feltrup-Azafzaf
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Association Les Amis des Oiseaux (AAO)
BirdLife in Tunisia



12. Raffael Ayé
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SVS/BirdLife Switzerland
BirdLife in Switzerland



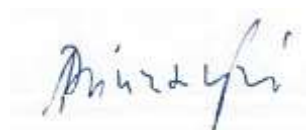

13. Sheku Kamara
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14. Dr. Damijan Denac
Chief Executive Officer
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15. Kaarel Võhandu
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18. Sigrid Andersen
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19. Alexandre Vintchevski
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20. Narcisse Tehe
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SOS-Forêts
BirdLife in Côte d'Ivoire
21. Dr Jaime Garcia Moreno,
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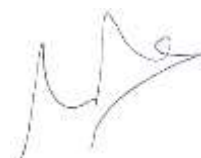
22. Dr Khadija Bourass
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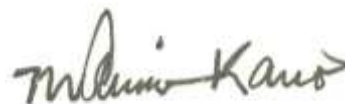
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24. Asunción Ruiz Guijosa
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SEO BirdLife
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25. Dr Muhtari Aminu-Kano
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27. Zdeněk Vermouzek
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29. Motshereganyi Kootsositse
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BirdLife Botswana
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30. Izabela Wilczyńska-Gadi
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31. Viesturs Kerus
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32. Mouhamadou Aliou Bah
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33. Imakando Crispin Sinyama Board Chair
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34. Iamin Jobaate
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West African Bird Study Association (WABSA)
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36. Mark Sultana
Chief Executive Officer
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37. Djibril Diallo
Directeur Exécutif
Nature Mauritanie
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38. Lotta Berg
Chief Executive Officer
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BirdLife in Sweden

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'Lotta Berg'.